



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION



Address:
18-20 Trinity Street
Room 202
Hartford, CT 06106
Tel: 860-240-0080
Fax: 860-240-0315
Email: apaac@cga.ct.gov
Website:
<http://ctapaac.com>

Chair

Dr. William A. Howe

Vice-Chair

Sheila Charmoy

Secretary

Uswah Khan

Treasurer

An-Ming Truxes

Commissioners

Arlene Avery

Dr. Vinh Cam

Theodore Feng

Jack K. Hasegawa

Theodore Hsu

Trung Le

George Mathanool

Thomas Nguyen-Phuoc

M. Angela Rola

Arvind Shaw

Henry C. Lee

(Honorary)

Executive Director

Mui Mui Hin-McCormick

Legislative Analyst

Alok Bhatt

Tuesday, March 11 2014

Dear Chairman Tercyak, Chairman Holder-Winfield, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Alok Bhatt. I serve as Legislative Analyst for the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC/the Commission). The Connecticut General Assembly established APAAC in 2008 to engage and advocate for our state's Asian Pacific American (APA) population. This population consists of peoples originating from over 62 countries, who speak more than 100 distinct languages and dialects.

In supporting APA women, and all women facing barriers to basic labor rights, APAAC writes in strong support of HB-5527: An Act Concerning a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.

Currently, little data exists on the demographics of domestic workers in Connecticut. The Connecticut Department of Labor estimates there are approximately 3,500 domestic workers in Connecticut, nearly all immigrants and women of color¹. Globally, more than 53,000,000 domestic workers provide a variety of personal and home care services, often for low wages, long hours, and minimal legal protection². Even in the United States, our Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) covers only public and private sector employees³. Informal employees, including care providers who work up to 24-hour shifts, remain excluded from basic labor rights, such as minimum wage and paid sick leave.

APAAC appreciates the Labor Committee's recognition of domestic workers as actual employees rather than mere assistants. We consider the language in HB-5527 requiring employers to delineate, in writing, workers' wages, terms of employment, availability of health coverage, vacation, and leave integral to basic labor rights. The Commission believes a clear statement of rights and responsibilities, fair wages, paid leave, and other benefits contribute to a sustainable industry model. By respecting the dignity of home and personal care providers, fostering a safe work environment, and reducing turnover, a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights will culminate in positive changes for an important yet overlooked workforce.

¹ <http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/wages/naics2013.asp#Social>

² <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/lang-en/index.htm>

³ <http://www.dol.gov/whd/flsa/>

18-20 Trinity Street, Hartford, CT 06106

Tel. (860) 240-0080, Fax (860) 240-0315

E-Mail: apaac@cga.ct.gov

Web Site – <http://ctapaac.com/>



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION



Furthermore, the Commission stands behind the rights of domestic workers to file complaints with the Labor Commissioner without fear of retaliation. Worldwide, domestic workers have reported exploitative treatment such as verbal, physical, and even sexual abuse, confinement, nonpayment, and derisory housing conditions⁴. We cannot allow these workers to remain so vulnerable any longer. Connecticut must commit to protecting domestic workers as it does public and private sector employees. We must enable these workers to exercise their human rights, while charging employers to honor the same.

In uplifting domestic workers, many of whom are APAs, from an institutionalized underclass, APAAC voices strong support for HB-5527. A Domestic Workers Bill of Rights will bring Connecticut in line with the international community of industrialized nations, as well as afford necessary protections to those who work to make our lives and homes comfortable.

The Commission greatly appreciates your time and consideration of this significant matter.

Sincerely,

Alok Bhatt
Legislative Analyst, Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission

⁴ http://www.antislavery.org/english/slavery_today/child_domestic_work.aspx